

CHAPTER 2

LEADERSHIP OF IMAMS IN MANAGING THE MOSQUE

2.0 Introduction of Imam

Imam (Arabic: إمام) means leader. In the usual sense, imam is an individual who is appointed to lead the congregation when performing prayers or good deeds. Another meaning of imam is the person who are entrusted to be leaders of a group in order to lead community to the right path (Caliphate). Mostly the imam is known as a human being who has been appointed to lead a mosque organization. In Islam, there are various Arabic terms used to discuss the meaning of imam, issues, and leadership matters from various levels such as *khilafah*, *imamah*, *qiyadah*, *zi'amah*, *ri'ayah*, *ria'sah*, *siyadah* and *siyasah* province.

In Islam, imams must be a frontliners who have fulfilled the requirements to be eligible lead prayers and other religious matters. It should be noted that the nature of lead is a nature and gifted by Allah SWT given to every human being. To be an Imam, leadership is the main element that need to be highlighted other than apart from qualifications in religious knowledge. Leadership also an extra talent that can be make an excellent imam in certain mosque. No doubt that Prophet Muhammad SAW is the best imam and only one role model of imam around the world that give a good model of talent and leadership. Allah SWT said in Al-Quran:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ
كَثِيرًا

21. *There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.*

(Al-Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 33: 21)

2.1 Imam in Al-Quran and Hadis

Imam is categorized as the important person in Islam based on the evidence in Al-Qur'an, As-Sunnah, and opinions giving by Islamic scholars (*ulama*). These people can be categorized as the mainstay and milestone in Islam. Imams must be among men who have sufficient eligibility requirements and not from ordinary people.

Imams are very synonymous with mosques and the Muslim community and they also play an important role in community development. Even the word Imam himself is mentioned in the Quran. According to Lokman Ab. Rahman 2014, Al Quran carries the word Imam in several contexts. Among them in surah al Baqarah, 2: 124 below:

وَإِذْ أَبْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي

قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

124. *And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham was tried by his Lord with commands, and he fulfilled them. [Allah] said, "Indeed, I will make you a leader for the*

people." [Abraham] said, "And of my descendants?" [Allah] said, "My covenant does not include the wrongdoers."

(Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2: 124)

Men are symbolic imams or religious leaders as we have seen in prophetic history where Allah appointed the Prophets all among men and this statement has been recorded in the Quran:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ
فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ
وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

34. Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.

(Al-Qur'an. An-Nisa' 4: 34)

Other legal arguments include:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّیْ جَاعِلٌ فِی الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةً ۗ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِیْهَا مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا وَیَسْفِكُ
الْدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ اِنِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

30. "And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."

(Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2: 30)

وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَیْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِیْزٌ حَكِیْمٌ

228. "But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."

(Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2: 228)

According to the scholars' debate on the verse, Allah SWT gives rank to men above women. The word rank here means creation, morality, power, *nafaqah*, obedience and advantages in this world and the hereafter. (Muhamamd Shahrizan, 2008)

From understanding the context of the imam in the mosque, it should also be seen at the beginning of the era of the appointment of the imam during the time of the Prophet

Muhammad SAW who was the imam of his companions (*sohabah*) and family. The Prophet Muhammad SAW also stated the matter of prayer to be the reference of the imam in leading the prayer as well as we can know the men should be the imam and it can help the organization of the mosque in appointing the imams.

صَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَلْيُؤْذِنْ لَكُمْ أَحَدُكُمْ وَلْيُؤْمِكُمْ
أَكْبَرُكُمْ

“Pray as you have seen me prayer, and when the time for prayer comes one of you should call the adhan for you and the oldest of you should act as imam.”

(Hadis. Bukhari & Muslim: No.115)

According to Dr. Wahbah Zuhaili, one of the reasons why men are preferred to women is because of this:

1) Men have stronger bodies and physicals.

Allah SWT gives responsibility which means by the men the perfection of their creation, sharp thinking, strength of reason, simple feelings. That is why men are able to give a sharp and thoughtful look. Prophets are also appointed the imams and Islamic leaders among men because of these advantages. They are also able to be leaders, imams, qadi, and so on.

According to Imam Al-Qurtubi, the men are preferred by Allah SWT over women in terms of livelihood (*nafaqah*), intellect, inheritance and they are also sanctioned to go out to fight and perform good deeds (*amar makruf*) and wrong deeds (*nahi mungkar*) more than the women.

2.2 The elements to appoint an Imam.

Al-Quran also mentions the words of imams in surah *Yaasin*, *Hud*, *Al-Ahqaf* and *Al-Hijr*. This shows that the word of the imam is very important in the treasures of Islamic life which is mandated to lead the prayers of worshippers, mosque institutions and communities.

The need to obtain the Imam (head in prayer) is classified as a necessary interest, but it is not necessarily an obligation. A permanent Imam must be a free person (not constrained by other occupations), fair, honest and have knowledge in a good religion of Islam. This statement was highlighted by Prophet Muhammad SAW in the Hadis:

يَوْمُ الْقَوْمِ أَقْرَوْهُمْ لِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَأَقْدَمُهُمْ قِرَاءَةً فَإِنْ كَانَتْ قِرَاءَتُهُمْ سَوَاءً فَلْيُؤَمِّمَهُمْ أَقْدَمُهُمْ هِجْرَةً فَإِنْ كَانُوا فِي الْهِجْرَةِ سَوَاءً فَلْيُؤَمِّمَهُمْ أَكْبَرُهُمْ سِنًا وَلَا تَوُثِّنَ الرَّجُلَ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَلَا فِي سُلْطَانِهِ وَلَا تَجْلِسْ عَلَى تَكْرِيمَتِهِ فِي بَيْتِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْذَنَ لَكَ أَوْ يَأْذِنَهُ

"The imam of a group is a person who is better at reciting the Quran. If they are equal in reciting, then the more pious in the hadith, if in the hadith they are the same then the former migrate, and if in hijrah they are still the same then the older ones are of their age among them."

(Hadis. Muslim: No.613)

In Malaysia, for mosques built by the government and regulated by it, usually government-recognized religious bodies such as the state or state Islamic religious

department are responsible for determining who is eligible to be an Imam. In Negeri Sembilan, this matter under task of *Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan* (JHEAINS). In the first stage, the list of persons that apply to be an Imam must apply under the portal of the State Religious Department of Negeri Sembilan. After that, all the applicants are called from the religious department to attend a formal interview. Basically, the aims of the interview to identify the level of education, the way of answering in the matters of worship (*Ibadah*), the way of recitation of the Quran (Tajwid), recitation of the Khutbah and Islamic book in Arabic language, and their beliefs (*Tauhid*). Usually, the interview is led by the Mufti of Negeri Sembilan and the grand imam of the State Mosque. Different view from some countries that the person who is eligible to hold office and the duties as an Imam is chosen by the King/Sultan or the minister in charge. While for mosques that are regulated or built by the private sector, the selection of Imams however is based on the votes or official selection of the appointed society (*qariah*) committee or refers to the general election especially among the congregations.

Flow appoints imams at Negeri Sembilan

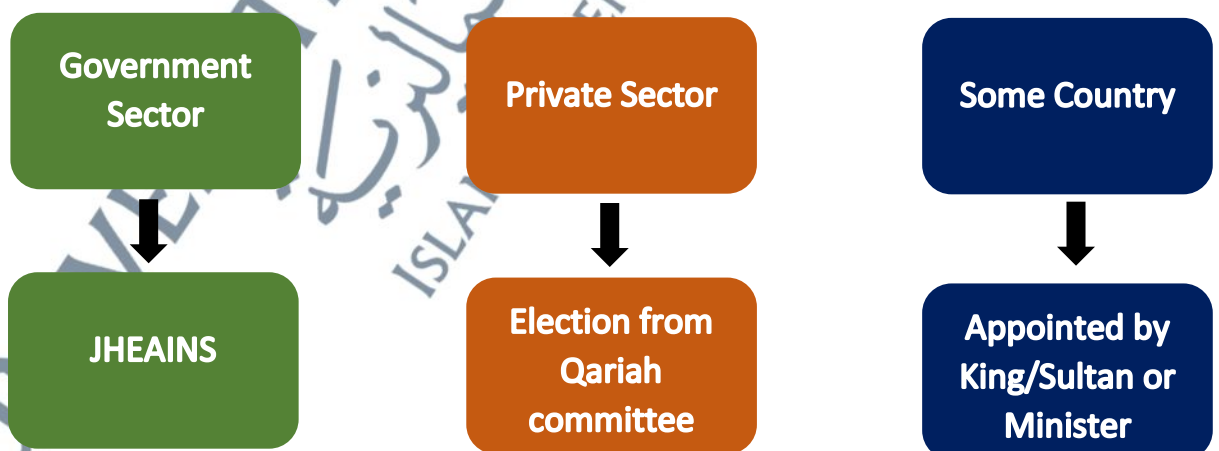


Chart 1.0: Flow appoints Imams in Negeri Sembilan.

The second part must be known of the imams is payment of salaries and allowances. Usually in part of responsibility and payment, the payment of salaries and allowance of the first Imam and second Imam at the mosques under the responsibilities of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*). Apart from that, they also get employment allowance from 2 sources, namely JAKIM and mosque department. Usually, JAKIM has aligned the consolation payment to all imams in Malaysia of RM850 while the rest is given by the mosque which is not the same for all mosques in Negeri Sembilan.

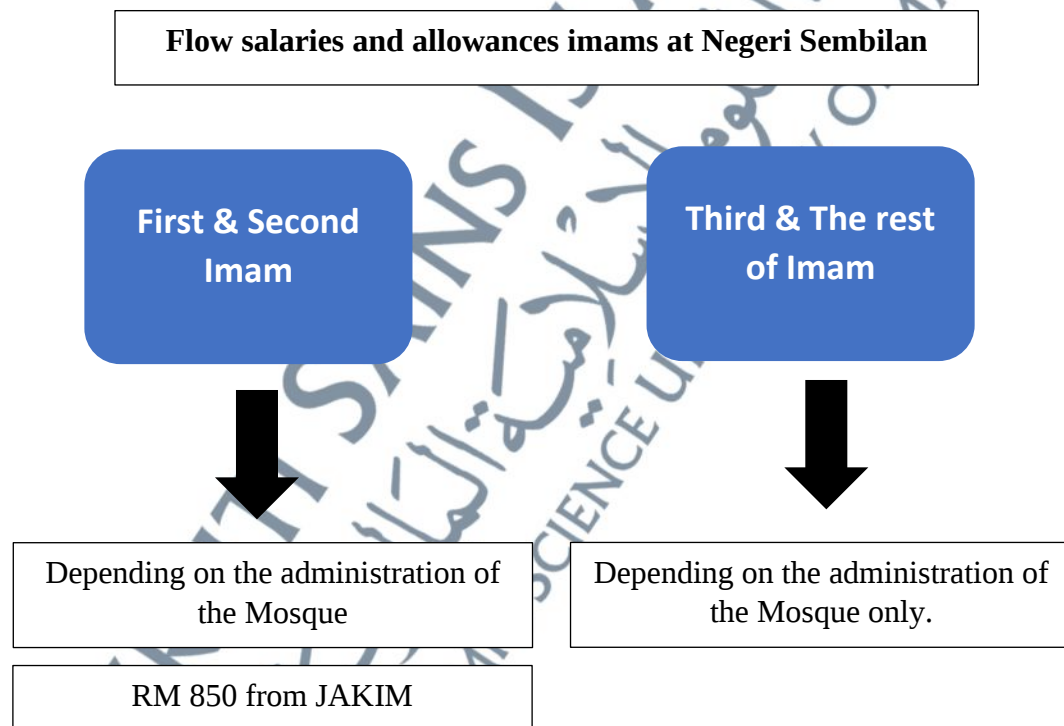


Chart 2.0: Flow salaries and allowances Imams in Negeri Sembilan.

2.3 Duties and roles of Imams.

There is no doubt that every human being has responsibilities and trusts that need to be verified. As Imams, their responsibilities are very synonymous with the mosque and the Muslim community. Imams also play a huge role which is important in the development of the community. So, the group of imams should not take a granted the issue of roles and duties because the word of duties and responsibilities was mentioned in the Al-Quran in surah An- Nisa', 4:58 below:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

58. *Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.*

(Al-Qur'an. An-Nisa' 4: 58)

Based on the enactment of Syariah in Selangor (2011), there are several duties and roles of the imams in the mosque. Among the duties and roles of the priest are the following:

1. Imam must be a religious (Syarie) officer in the place (kariah) of the mosque and perform the obligatory prayer and any other congregational prayer in the mosque.

2. Imam should lead the matter of *fardu kifayah* on the remains of Muslims who died in the who are in area is gazetted as the place where the imams are on duty.
3. Lead the Friday Prayer and read Friday sermons (*khutbah*) and Hari Raya sermons.
4. Provide advice and guidance in matters pertaining to the Islamic religion to the society of the mosque as much as possible.
5. Lead, supervise and organize the teaching of Islam among the society of the mosque.
6. Guiding *Bilal*, *Siak* and the society of the mosque in carrying out the duties of the Imam.
7. Attend every meeting of the Mosque Officer and the society (*Kariah*) Committee of the mosque.
8. Accept and comply with any instructions given by MAIS or the Secretary of MAIS or by the Nazir of the mosque.

In general, the role and duties of this imams are enormous if we mentioned about it. It will be success if this task can be properly completed, then it will leave a very big impression on society and religion. As a Muslim, it is an instinct and hope for us to expect our area to be peaceful, harmonious, and blessed by Allah SWT as stated in the Quran:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ ءَايَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُّوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا

لَهُمْ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبُّ غَفُورٌ

15. There was for [the tribe of] Saba' in their dwelling place a sign: two [fields of] gardens on the right and on the left. [They were told], "Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord."

(Al-Qur'an. Saba' 34: 15)

Looking from the current scenario in the country, there are still many imams in suraus and mosques in the country who do not have the proper qualifications to administer the mosque. Many imams in suraus and mosques are only qualified to lead prayers. The good imam also must have a talent and self-potential to carry out responsibilities as the caliph of Allah on the face of the earth.

Meanwhile, according to Lokman Ab. Rahman (2014), today imams as civil servants or volunteer energy have become an important concern. Its importance is equivalent to the role in which the imams serve, namely in the mosque which is the high expectation of the community. The tendency of society to place the role of the mosque is no longer a sacred institution, but also as a centre of community activities causing the role of the institution of the imam must be dignified and equipped with all forms of knowledge and related skills. Therefore, the scope of Islamic studies today is not enough to simply understand the contents of the books and memorize the methods of a science alone to produce a professional imam-ulama to manage and administer an institution that is considered sacred. Equivalent to the term imam, which is the reference of the community, the imams should master the knowledge of *Islamic Turath*, Arabic language, the knowledge of *tajwid* and integrated with another knowledge that is directly related to the career they are pursuing.

Based on the number of worshippers attending the mosque at this time, it can be said that the mosques in Malaysia are experiencing the same situation which is the reduction in the number of congregations attending the mosque. Abd Farid Salleh, 2022, is the Grand Imam of the Perak State Mosque stating that the number of congregations attending the mosque is very troubling. According to him, previously around 200 congregations will attend the mosque during the obligatory (*fardhu*) prayer. However, this year having the trouble when the total amount of congregations did not reach 100 people when attending to the mosque every time of the obligatory (*fardhu*) prayer. This situation is very worrying because when occurred at the State Mosque that we know State Mosque is the main mosque of every state. We also worried about the situation of congregations that attend in Kariah Mosque or Surau.

According to that situation, Mohd Rozaini et al (2014) said that the relationship between mosque institutions and community development is very close. The success of a mosque organization depends on the number of worshipers who attend the mosque. This is because starting from a good and well-managed mosque institution, a good community is formed based on the Quran and As-Sunnah. Allah's assurance is clear about the good that is found in this world and the Hereafter for the formation of a community.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

201. But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

(Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2: 201)

Other evidence include:

وَأَكْتُبْ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدْنَا إِلَيْكَ قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

156. And decree for us in this world [that which is] good and [also] in the Hereafter; indeed, we have turned back to You." [Allah] said, "My punishment - I afflict with it whom I will, but My mercy encompasses all things." So, I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me and give zakah and those who believe in Our verses.

(Al-Qur'an. Al-A'raf 7: 156)

Other evidence include:

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا خَيْرًا لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَلَدَارُ

الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ

30. And it will be said to those who feared Allah, "What did your Lord send down?" They will say, "[That which is] good." For those who do good in this world is good; and the home of the Hereafter is better. And how excellent is the home of the righteous

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(Al-Qur'an. Al-Nahl 16: 30)

According to Sohirin (2008), the mosque since the time of the Prophet SAW has a great responsibility in the development of the community. Hence, mosque officials i.e., Imam, Bilal, Siak, as well as mosque committee members should be proactive and creative in providing activities, facilities, and assistance to attract the interest of the Muslim community towards the mosque.

2.4 Conclusion

According to Lokman Ab. Rahman 2014 stated that it is important for imams to follow the Mosque Management module provided by the Malaysian Islamic Development Department because the imam is a reference point for other local communities and is respected by the entire community. Even to fulfil the function of the existence and needs of the mosque today, the requirements of a prayer imam are inadequate to lead a mosque institution that needs a professional and skilled imam. This is supported by the study of Mahazzan & Abdullah 2014, which stated that in line with the increasingly challenging life, the role of mosque administrators is also increasing. The imams need to revive the role of the mosque and cultivate Islam as a way of life in the community. They also need to have dynamic and capable leadership to develop excellent human capital (Rofishah et. Al. 2015). This statement supported by the verse in Al-Quran:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنِ

أَضْطَرَّ فِي حُكْمَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

3. *This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.*

(Al-Qur'an. Al-Maidah 5: 3)

As a conclusion, in line with the mosque as a community centre, the groups of imams need to have competency model so that the management of the mosque institution will be managed well. At the same time, the community will attract to the mosque because the mosque has a big of important such as a place to motivate, a place that can solve the problems especially in religious and family matters. So, it can be the place to improve the standard of living.